

President's Corner Sing Out!

by Janet Millenson

More often than we like, money talks when it comes to influencing public policy decisions. This poses a dilemma for birders who care about conservation.

On the one hand, birding is a pastime that can be enjoyed almost anywhere without a lot of equipment or expense. (Even binoculars are optional if you've got a well-placed window!) You don't need to buy a license to operate a spotting scope, nor will you be fined for birding out of season. A fancy new binoculars strap counts as a fashion statement. Birders who respect private property and don't harass wildlife can have maximum fun with minimum impact. We don't make a lot of noise, or run people down, or employ dangerous implements.

On the other hand, this low profile means that birders are not seen as a key constituency when decisions are made about land use and development. People who hunt, fish, boat, and cycle are highly visible sources of recreation dollars. Yet the guy standing quietly at the edge of a pond, wearing old boots and a battered cap, may have spent thousands on his optics, digital camera, and sound recorder, not to mention buying gas and food on the way here. Back home, his bookshelves groan with hundreds of dollars' worth of field guides and reference books, while his feeder birds could qualify as dependents for tax purposes.

So given that it's hard to measure the economic impact of birding—and the birds

(President's Corner continues on page 2)



The Maryland Yellowthroat

Newsletter of the Maryland Ornithological Society

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

VOL. 25, NO. 1

CONFERENCE 2005

MAY 20-22 • SOLOMONS, CALVERT COUNTY

With the 2005 conference, MOS marks its 60th anniversary. Co-hosted by the Anne Arundel Chapter of MOS and the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, and headquartered at the Holiday Inn Select, this conference will be just the second time that MOS has met in this beautiful area.

Peter Hanan will again be organizing field trips, which will reflect the diversity of life around estuaries where salt and fresh water mix, and the rich birding habitats surrounding the bay. Birds will be sought in a cypress swamp, on a sandy beach, on a fresh-water pond, and on the Patuxent River as well as around archaeological digs. Birders and non-birders alike will be able to explore the region's colonial and maritime past. Trips are already being planned for Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties, and Peter (who did a fantastic job in 1999) is looking for field trip leaders. Please contact him (peter.hanan@comcast.net) if you are available.

Keynote speaker will be **Dr. Donald Messersmith**, professor emeritus of entomology at the University of Maryland and a member of the Montgomery Bird Club. Don, who's been involved with MOS for many years in numerous capacities, was recently appointed MOS Historian, so it is most appropriate that he will be giving us an overview of MOS history during the last 60 years. Many of us have enjoyed Don's witty and informative talks on a wide variety of birding subjects.

As usual, we will have a Silent Auction/Raffle, an Artists' Display,

and a Nature Store. **Maryanne Dolan** (abtrowbridge@msn.com) will handle both the Silent Auction and the Raffle. **Dale Johnson** (ckadj@juno.com) is organizing our Artists' Exhibit. Both Maryanne and Dale will need help at the conference; contact them directly to volunteer. Dale would also appreciate any names of local artists who might want to participate. Derrick and Josie Ollinger, Wild Birds Unlimited store owners from Gambrills, will provide the resident Nature Store. Derrick and Josie are members of our Anne Arundel chapter; this will be their first conference.

Atlas Coordinator **Walter Ellison** (rossgull@baybroadband.net) is looking for help with atlas blocks. (See page 3). Anyone willing to do so should contact Walter directly.

At the September Board meeting, **John Malcolm** was authorized to hold a fire sale of items from the MOS merchandise store that have been selling poorly. Thus, **Joy Aso** and John will be overseeing a sell-off of various MOS logo items.

A few innovations:

- Registration and field trip signups will start at 11 AM on Friday, May 20.
- ACTIVE volunteers will be able to pre-register for field trips.
- We now have permanent signs designating field trip departure areas.

I look forward to seeing many of you in May.

—Janet Shields
janetbill@prodigy.net

Inside this Issue:

President's Corner	1
Conference 2005	1
DNR Reports	2
Winter 2005 Atlas	3
Conservation Connection	4
Important Bird Areas Program	5
Birds of Note	6
Chapter Chatter	7
MOS Board Minutes	8
October 10 Big Sit	10
Board Bulletins	11
MOS Calendar	12
Telling Tales	13
Pin Design Contest	15
MOS Scholarships	15
Avian Environmentalism	
Web Links	16
Last Call	16

President's Corner *(continued from page 1)*

themselves neither spend money nor cast ballots—how can we increase our clout? The first step is to make officials aware that birding organizations represent thousands and thousands of people who care deeply about protecting our wildlife and habitats. Mention your bird club whenever possible, especially when you're spending money on birding-related products or activities. Although MOS is not allowed to endorse specific candidates or act in a partisan manner, we can certainly encourage politicians to support our views. Your membership in MOS gives weight to our official positions on environmental issues.

Another step is to act as an individual advocate. Keep those passionate letters to the editor coming, but also write directly to government or corporate officials. [Ed. note: Check Conservation Connection on page 4.] Let them know that you spend money on birding, you vote, and there are lots of others like you out there. If you also hunt or fish, pedal or paddle, mention that too.

Being quiet and inconspicuous is a good idea when watching birds. When you want to influence environmental policy, however, you have to step forward and speak up. It can make a real difference.

The Maryland Yellowthroat

Newsletter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, Inc.

Editor:	Lydia Schindler paulydia@erols.com 301-977-5252
Layout:	Suzanne Probst sprobst@comcast.net 410-992-3489
Calendar Editor:	Candi Lee Cleelee@comcast.net 410-287-0415
Proofreader:	Ann Weeks annweeks@erols.com
Mailing list:	Bill Guion bguion@comcast.net 301-490-0444
MOS website:	http://www.mdbirds.org
Webmaster:	Frances C. Saunders fcsaunders@att.net

Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas that would be of interest to other birders. Copy may be mailed or e-mailed to Lydia Schindler by January 25, 2005 for the March/April 2005 issue.

Illustrations on pages 1, 7, 10, and 13
© M. Suzanne Probst



DNR Reports... by Glen Therres

The other evening as I was watching "The Wizard of Oz" with my children, I heard the famous phrase, "Lions, and tigers, and bears, oh my!" It got me thinking about work.

- **Bears in Maryland, oh my!** Yes, we do have bears. If you haven't heard about the first black bear hunt in Maryland in over 50 years, then you weren't watching television or reading the newspapers this past fall.
- **Tigers in Maryland, oh my!** This is a bit of a stretch, but two years ago law enforcement agents confiscated a young Bengal tiger from a home on Kent Island.
- **Lions in Maryland, oh my!** That is an unsolved mystery. Historically, mountain lions did roam the wilderness of Maryland. Also known as cougar, puma, or panther, these native big cats occurred throughout the state when the earliest colonists arrived. As Maryland was settled by the Europeans, forests were cleared and our mountain lions started to disappear. The early settlers shot them because they killed deer and livestock. These lions were also feared and, thus, persecuted. By the mid-1800s, our mountain lions had vanished from all but the remote mountainous areas of western Maryland.

The last of Maryland's remnant population of mountain lions is thought to have disappeared in the late 1800s. By that time, the white-tailed deer population (the principal prey species of this big cat) was reduced considerably by market hunters and homesteaders. Also, the extensive forests in western Maryland were seriously logged for lumber and charcoal. The combination of these two factors, plus the ongoing persecution of this "vermin," made it virtually impossible for the species to persist. This same scenario was played out throughout the Appalachian Mountains and elsewhere in eastern North America.

The eastern cougar was declared an endangered species by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1973. The only remnant population in the East is the endangered Florida panther. In the 1970s, the USFWS tried to confirm the presence of eastern cougars in the Appalachian Mountains but could not do so. No conclusive evidence could be found.

Today, we still receive reports of mountain lions, cougars, panthers, and even black panthers in Maryland. All the Eastern states receive similar reports. Is there a remnant population of mountain lions in Maryland? That is a 64-dollar question.

Each year we receive 10 to 20 reports from citizens who see, hear, or find signs of cougars. Or so they think! Reports come from throughout the state, though most are from western Maryland or the suburbs of Baltimore and Washington. Most sightings involve a glimpse of an animal darting across the road or into the woods. Most sightings are made without the aid of binoculars or camera. Many sightings are at night.

Though it would seem fairly easy to identify a full-grown mountain lion, is it? It's hard to misidentify an adult bald eagle, but it happens all the time. We receive reports of bald eagles that turn out to be osprey, hawks, black-backed gulls, and even pigeons. Proper identification requires attention to details.

Evidence has also been provided, but none that is conclusive. Many times we receive photos of tracks or, on occasion, casts of tracks. And our technicians

(DNR Reports continues on page 6)



WINTER 2005 ATLAS NEWSLETTER: ANOTHER MAP, SOME ANNOUNCEMENTS

BY WALTER ELLISON AND NANCY MARTIN

The accompanying map illustrates the 172 Maryland and D.C. miniroutes that have been completed over the last two years. Our target for the 2005 field season is to complete at least one miniroute in each of the 130 quadrangles that do not yet have a completed route. Counties in particular need of miniroute coverage are Allegany, Baltimore, Charles, D.C., Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester. As some of these are attractive birding destinations (e.g., Worcester), or counties with good birder populations (e.g., Howard, Montgomery), we hope people who are confident of their birding-by-ear skills will volunteer their time for these 15-stop roadside surveys. Contact Nancy for further information.

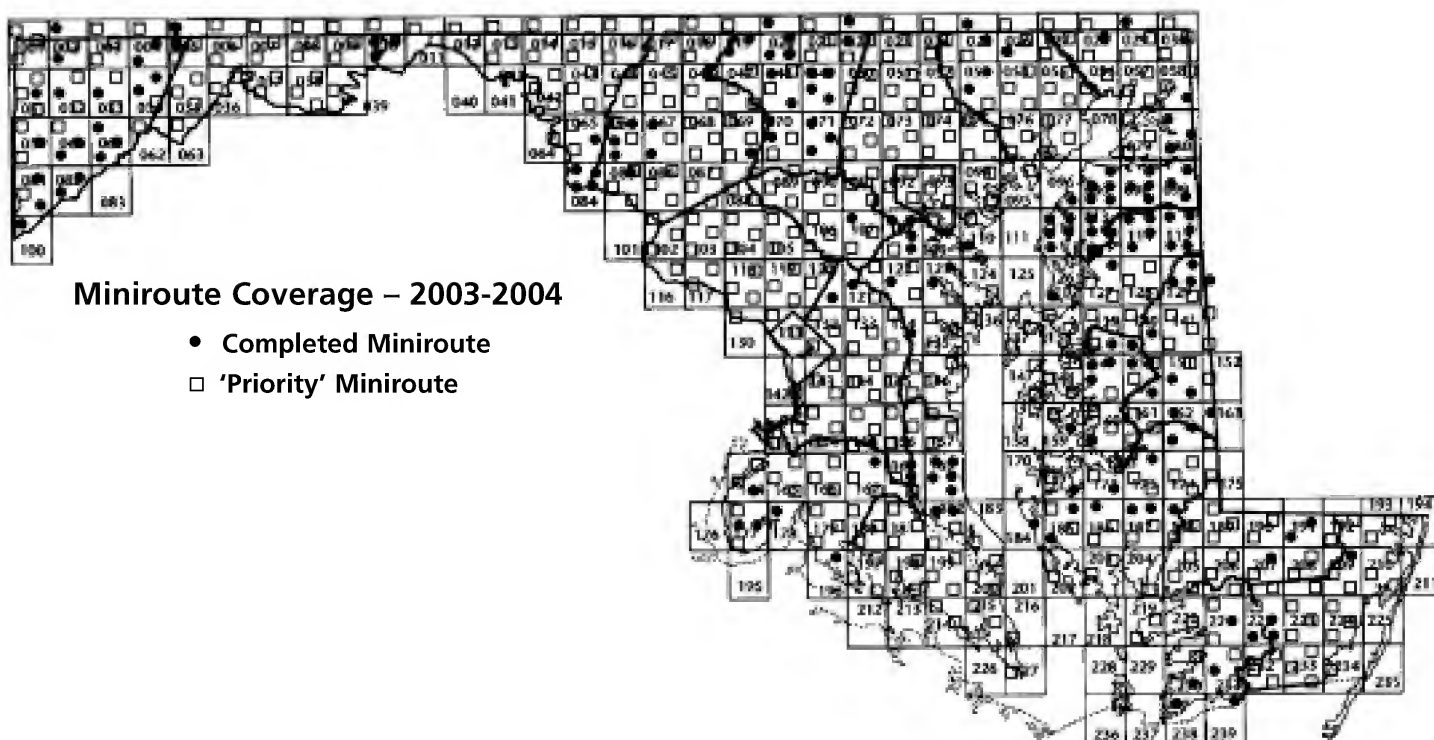
With two years left to "clean up," it is also time to consider intensifying atlas work during the annual MOS conference. Although this year's conference—May 20-22—will precede many safe dates, much effective atlassing can be done in the third week of May. We are hoping to field block-busting

teams in Calvert (two blocks), St. Mary's (at least one block), and Charles (as many as five blocks) during the conference. Chan Robbins, Bob Ringler, and I will lead some of these trips, and we hope to have help from local County Coordinators. If you are confident in your atlassing abilities and have the initiative to do a bit of birding alone or in a small, coordinated group, please get in touch with me so I can assess our birder power for this effort.

The Atlas Board and I are also working out the wording for an atlas block-busting job announcement. We are contemplating paying block-busters by the block, with mileage reimbursement. Keep an eye on the atlas web site at www.mdbirds.org/atlas.html and *MDOsprey* for more information about this opportunity to spend late May to late July exploring the birdy hinterlands of Maryland.

—Walter Ellison (rossgull@baybroadband.net)

Nancy Martin (borealdee@baybroadband.net)



The Conservation Connection

By Maureen F. Harvey



IN MARYLAND

Action Alerts:

#1 Rescue Program Open Space (POS): In the Nov/Dec 2004 *Yellowthroat*, Rich Dolesh wrote eloquently about the history of POS and the value of this program in bird and habitat conservation—and how POS funds are being siphoned off into the general fund. You are again urged to contact Governor Ehrlich and your MD state legislators and encourage them to restore the special POS transfer tax to its original purpose, the purchase of land for conservation.

#2 Challenge Sale of State Parklands: Last year Governor Ehrlich asked the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other land-owning departments to identify state-owned properties that could be sold to help balance the budget. DNR's list includes several excellent birding sites, including a segment of the Patapsco Valley State Park (PVSP) in Carroll County, and Hidden Valley (former property of the late Orville Crowder) in Harford County. The complete list can be found at <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/dnrnews/pressrelease2004/111604a.html>. The Carroll Co section of PVSP has already been developed into trails and ball fields. Some of the properties on the list may have been purchased in part with Program Open Space money. Is this another way of undermining that vital program?

The Baltimore Sun printed many letters of objection in Nov 2004, including letters from MOS members. Please contact the Governor and your state legislators to point out the importance of these parklands (and any other properties on the list that you are familiar with) for bird conservation and bird-related education and recreation, indicating your concerns about losing these valuable public properties. You may wish to add that public land should not be sold without public input.

Not all of these properties are likely to be sold for cash. Some are not suitable for development. Although it may be appropriate for the state to sell some of the smaller tracts, properties that are useful for conservation should be transferred to the respective counties. This could save the state maintenance costs without opening these properties to development.

It is more effective to address only one issue in each letter, email, or phone call. Contact information is as follows:

Office of the Governor,
Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925
1-800-811-8336
governor@gov.state.md.us

For your legislator's email address, visit <http://mlis.state.md.us/>

Roth Rock Wind Plant: MOS Registers as Interested Party.

In July 2004, Synergics, Inc. of Annapolis applied for a permit with the MD Public Service Commission (PSC) to build 23 wind turbines near Roth Rock, a well-known Garrett Co birding hot-spot. Dan Boone and his brother, Jon Boone, have filed with the PSC as interveners in opposition to the project. At a preliminary PSC hearing, MOS President Janet Millenson and Baltimore Bird Club conservation activist Carol Schreter succeeded in registering MOS as an interested party in the permitting process. As such, MOS' letters filed with the PSC officially become part of the case. Also, MOS will receive all future papers filed with the PSC regarding the permitting process. Wind turbine projects had been on hold because the federal wind energy tax credit expired in Dec 2003; however, the credit was recently renewed through Dec 2005.

IN THE NATION

Environmental Groups Sue EPA over Pesticide Rule Change.

In July 2004, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a rule change that weakens endangered species protections by streamlining the pesticide-use permitting process. This rule was changed despite government data indicating that more than 375 endangered or threatened species are jeopardized by pesticides, and without regard to the concerns expressed by MOS, the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), and many other conservation organizations.

With the rule change, the EPA now may assess the impact of pesticides on endangered species without consulting the USFWS and National Forest Service. The change also gives the chemical industry special participation rights that are not shared by the public.

A coalition of nine environmental organizations, including Defenders of Wildlife, filed suit in federal court to challenge this rule change. Jamie Rappaport Clark, former FWS director and current Executive VP of Defenders of Wildlife, stated, "This decision lets EPA off the hook instead of requiring it to do its job. Now more potentially dangerous chemicals can be pumped into the environment without proper review."

MOS' ABC Reps Attend Inaugural Meeting of Bird

Conservation Alliance. MOS has been an active member of ABC for many years, with our representatives attending ABC's policy committee meetings. In Nov 2004, MOS representatives Paul Zucker and Gail Mackiernan, along with President Janet Millenson, attended the first meeting of the new Bird Conservation Alliance. This ABC spin-off is designed to facilitate cooperative action by its many disparate member organizations, uniting birders and concerned citizens with conservation professionals, scientists, and educators for the conservation of wild birds. Paul reports that the 100-plus attendees at the meeting made good progress with regard to planning and organizing, and the organization promises to provide many interesting possibilities for member organizations to become more actively involved in specific ABC conservation efforts.

THE MARYLAND-DC IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS PROGRAM: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

BY DAVID CURSON

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are sites that provide essential habitat for one or more species of bird. The IBA Program, initiated by Birdlife International in the 1980s, has identified such sites at the global level, at the national level (more than 100 countries have IBA programs), and, in the USA, at the level of individual states. At all of these levels, the goal of the program is simple: to identify a network of sites that contain the habitat needed to maintain healthy populations of birds, and focus conservation efforts on these sites.

You may remember that Maryland and DC launched an IBA program in the 1990s. At that time the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) was overseeing the US program, and the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS) coordinated the Maryland-DC effort to identify sites, with many dedicated birders submitting nominations. Although a "first round" of IBAs was identified, changes in the criteria for selecting sites left their status somewhat unclear. Three Global Important Bird Areas in Maryland were recognized from this early effort. These are: Assateague Island, which provides breeding habitat for 2% of the global population of Piping Plover; Blackwater-Fishing Bay marshes, home to >1% of all Black Rails; and Eastern Neck NWR, where 2,000 Tundra Swans (1% of the population) spend the early part of each winter.

A few years ago Birdlife International chose the National Audubon Society as its partner to run the program in the US, because Audubon's network of state offices and chapters give it a nationwide reach to volunteer birders and conservationists. A new Technical Review Committee resumed work on reviewing Maryland IBAs, and in 2004 Audubon Maryland-DC hired a Director of Bird Conservation to lead the Program.

So now that the Maryland-DC IBA Program is back in business, where are we? First, the criteria for **state-level IBAs** have been revised to make the process of site selection more scientifically rigorous and quantitative. A solid scientific basis for the criteria means that IBAs can more effectively contribute to strategic conservation planning. A site can qualify as a state-level IBA under any of the following categories of criteria:

- 1) Significant concentrations of birds regularly occurring, with different numeric thresholds for the following groups:
 - Waterfowl (7,000);
 - Seabirds and/or terns (400), gulls (10,000);
 - Shorebirds or rails (1,000 at a coastal site, 300 at an inland site);
 - Wading birds (500 breeding pairs, 200 non-breeding individuals);
 - Raptors (8,000 seasonal total of migrants);
 - Landbirds (no absolute threshold, but exceptional numbers at the statewide level).

- 2) Significant populations of birds of conservation priority. For State Threatened and Endangered Species, thresholds include 1% of the state population. For other species of conservation priority, thresholds include 5% of the state population or the 2-3 sites with the highest numbers.
- 3) Species assemblages characteristic of rare or representative habitats, i.e., a relatively complete community of habitat specialists, for instance, forest interior dwelling species, grassland birds, etc.
- 4) Sites where long-term research or monitoring continues to generate and publish high-quality, standardized data of value to conservation planning at the statewide scale.

The full criteria provide more detail than these brief descriptions. They include lists of species of conservation priority in Maryland-DC, and habitat specialists of the major habitat types. They will soon be available from the Audubon MD-DC website.

At the time of writing, we are almost ready to announce the first round of state-level IBAs. A list of these IBAs will be posted shortly on the Audubon MD-DC website, along with the revised criteria and nomination forms, so that birders and other interested people can nominate sites not yet identified as IBAs. Nominations from people with detailed knowledge and concern about a site are particularly valuable, not just because we don't have the staff to compile every nomination ourselves, but also because volunteer involvement through "Citizen Science" is an integral part of the IBA program.

Site recognition is just the first part of the IBA process. Bird conservation at IBA sites includes monitoring bird populations and their habitats, compiling threat assessments, conservation planning for habitat management, and carrying out conservation work on the ground. Volunteer support groups can play a vital role in these activities.

How will IBAs help birds?

The comprehensive, statewide approach of the IBA program will help to direct scarce conservation resources to the most essential and vulnerable areas. This can happen via the land-use planning process and via grant-funded resource management initiatives. For example, state-level IBA programs have been incorporated into some states' Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy; in Pennsylvania, IBAs automatically get an additional 20 points (out of 100) when being ranked for public purchase.

Habitat degradation, as well as outright loss, is a major cause of bird population declines. At IBAs that are already

IBA Program *(continued from page 5)*

protected, bird and habitat monitoring by volunteers can help to improve habitat management for priority species. When management plans for public natural areas are updated, how often do overstretched agency biologists have the data they need to make the best decisions for vulnerable species like Worm-eating Warbler or Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow? Experienced birders in an active IBA support group can provide critical information on population trends, habitat condition, and ecological requirements when these are needed.

What's next?

Over the coming months I will be visiting many of the MOS chapters with a presentation about the IBA Program.

Please contact me to arrange a presentation at your club if one is not already scheduled. And look for updates in future issues of the *Yellowthroat*.

For more information about the Maryland-DC IBA Program, including the revised criteria, contact Audubon MD-DC's Director of Bird Conservation, David Curson, at: Audubon MD-DC, 2437 Eastern Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21224; e-mail dcurson@audubon.org; telephone: 410-558-2473, and check the Audubon MD-DC website at <http://www.audubonmddc.org/conservation.htm> for IBA updates.

DNR Reports *(continued from page 2)*

have gone out and examined tracks thought to be those of mountain lions. Most turn out to be tracks of canines, either dogs or coyotes. Though canine tracks usually show their claw marks, while cat tracks usually do not, there are exceptions. Proper identification requires attention to details.

On rare occasions, someone videotapes or photographs a "cougar." I have seen three such videos in the past 10 years. In two, it was relatively easy to determine that the animal in question was not a cougar. However, one video taken by a landowner in Garrett County cannot be ruled out completely. We concluded that the animal was a "big cat" though we could not confirm it to be a mountain lion. That video was later shown on MPT, and the interview aired along with the footage of the big cat raised some doubt. Proper identification requires attention to details.

If mountain lions were extirpated from Maryland by the start of the 1900s, then what are people seeing? Recently, someone reported seeing a mountain lion at the site of a fresh deer kill. When one of our technicians investigated, he found the dead deer covered by leaves, which is characteristic of a cat kill. He placed a trail camera at the site and got great photos that night—of a bobcat. Bobcats occur in the mountains of western Maryland, but with a body length of 2 to 3 feet, they are just about half the size of a cougar. Moreover, they have short, stubby tails; the cougar's tail, in contrast, is 2 to 3 feet long. Coyotes dashing across the road can be mistaken for mountain lions; like mountain lions, they are tan in color with long tails. Fishers—dark brown weasels 3 to 4 feet long—live in the mountains of extreme western Maryland; they can be misidentified as black panthers. Even large house cats can be mistaken for cougars in poor light or at distances.

Could there be a mountain lion or two roaming the wilds of Maryland? Sure there could. It is not hard to find mountain lions for sale on the Internet. Do a search for "pet mountain lion sale" and you will find that \$500 is all

you need to buy one. We have trapped alligators, caimans, and wallabies from the wild in Maryland, so it is not inconceivable for a former pet cougar to be out there.

In the case of a mountain lion, it could be hard to distinguish between former captive animal and true native cat. But before we tackle that question, a mountain lion must be confirmed.

Birds of Note • Fall 2004

On October 24, a male **LAZULI BUNTING** surprised birders looking for sparrows at an orchard west of Pokomoke City, Somerset County. It flitted in and out of hedgerows for a couple of hours.

A CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD—a likely first state record—flew in to a yard near Bowie, Prince George's County, November 11 and liked what she found; this hatch-year female, having been banded and extensively photographed, was still there at the end of the month.

CAVE SWALLOWS—at least four of them—showed up in late November at Lilypons in Frederick County and Black Hill RP in Montgomery County. By the next week, Cave Swallows (a species yet to be officially accepted in Maryland, though two reports are under review) were being spotted in Talbot County, at Wades Point west of St. Michael's; at Assateague Island, Worcester County; in Harford County and Prince George's County.



Anne Arundel Club Birds Eastern Shore of Virginia

The Anne Arundel Bird Club had a field trip to Kiptopeke State Park, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel, Eastern Shore of VA NWR, and Fisherman's Island in mid-October. Participants included ten Anne Arundel Bird Club members along with two Baltimore Bird Club members. Bird numbers were down to some degree due to cool and windy weather.

In all, 115 species of birds were tallied. Highlights were **Clay-colored Sparrow** at the NWR, **Vesper Sparrow** and **Bobolink** at the CBB/T, **Western Kingbird** along Rte 600 just north of the NWR, immature White Ibis at the pond close to the NWR boat launch area, a Peregrine Falcon up close and personal at the Kiptopeke hawk watch platform, a large group of Willet and two Marbled Godwit floating on the water like a raft of ducks at Willis Wharf, a couple of Sandwich Tern at Fisherman's Island, an American Woodcock behind the Days Inn, and the Tree Swallows massing and plummeting to their roost at dusk at Oyster.

Our thanks to the NWR staff who took us on a walk on Fisherman's Island with one day's notice. Also, Barry Truitt of The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Coast Reserve Program gave us a personal tour of the NASA radar site just north of Oyster and showed us how the radar is used to monitor bird migration.

—Al Haury

Emmalyn Holdridge: Patuxent Research Refuge Volunteer of the Year

Emmalyn Holdridge—Howard Bird Club member and treasurer as well as state MOS Treasurer—has been chosen as the Patuxent Research Refuge 2004 Volunteer of the Year. As such, she is a nominee for

the NWRA's Volunteer of the Year 2005. Emy's coworkers feel that she has the true spirit of volunteerism and love of the natural world.

Since her volunteer work began in 1999, she has contributed in excess of 3,000 hours in a variety of volunteer jobs and opportunities. In FY04 alone she volunteered an incredible 800 hours, showing tireless energy and dedication to the mission of the refuge and the refuge system.

Emy is part of the North Tract (NT) monitoring team, and she helped the NT staff write the first draft of the NT Trail Guide, now in print. Being an avid birder and wanting to provide all visitors with an opportunity to experience birds, she wrote the original proposal for the new bird observation site outside the VCS. Visitors who wish to observe birds from inside the VCS have access to binoculars, bird guides, an observation log, and knowledgeable volunteers—an innovation that has been a huge success! Emy regularly guides visitors on birding tours and has great knowledge of the natural history of the birds encountered. She also maintains the 15 bird feeders.

Almost every Tuesday morning, Emy assists with the weekly waterfowl survey on the Central and South tracts of the refuge. She was a major contributor to the Backyard Bird Count at the refuge this past year, and Christmas bird counts over the years.

Over the last few years, Emy has become involved with volunteer management, assisting the volunteer coordinator with the orientation, training, and mentoring of new volunteers. This is no easy task at Patuxent, since orientation sessions occur monthly and last six hours. Because she understands the needs of new volunteers, Emy has been a great help in improving and streamlining the orientations and creating volunteer handbooks. As a result of her efforts, volunteer retention and involvement have improved greatly.

Other duties include scheduling conferences, dealing with school groups, answering phones, and helping staff with paperwork. Her input and ideas have contributed to the huge fund-raising successes of the Annual Patuxent Wildlife Art Show.

A few glowing comments made by staff and volunteers are that Emy helps wherever she's needed, always completes tasks with a smile, demonstrates dedication and friendship to all, has tireless energy and dedication to the mission of Patuxent,

helps anytime, and gives invaluable input to any project to which she's connected.

It is the hope of the Patuxent Research Refuge that Emy receives the honor of representing the refuge system as the National Volunteer of the Year.

—Sue Buswell

MBC Rewards Wild Bird Project at Science Fair

Last spring at the Montgomery Area Science Fair, Hannah Moore, a sixth grader at Sligo Middle School, was honored for her well-documented project entitled, "Are Birds Attracted to Color?" The Montgomery Bird Club panel of judges, Sam Freiberg and Rick and Nancy Sussman, awarded Hannah a \$50 ANS gift certificate funded through the Claudia Wilds Fund and a junior membership in the Montgomery Bird Club.

Hannah evaluated the amounts of mixed birdseed consumed at three differently colored feeders, blue, red, and natural brown. She kept detailed daily records for ten consecutive days in late September and October. She also rotated the three feeders to cancel out the effect of location.

Despite her supposition that birds might be more attracted to red because hummingbirds tend to favor that color, Hannah found no significant differences. She plans to continue the project in different seasons and will use different vegetable colors on the seed itself.

—Sam Freiberg

In the News

Cecil Bird Club's Charlie Gant: The legend continues!

CBC's own Charlie Gant was featured in a *Cecil Whig* article on November 5. *Whig* reporter Jane Weaver had contacted us earlier in the year about doing an article about Bald Eagles in Cecil County. We told her that the best time to do the article would be November-December and, of course, the man to talk to would be Charlie.

The eagle's ability to pique the interest of beginning birders is very important to us as a club. A steady influx of "new blood" is essential to the health of the club. Introducing newcomers to the wonders of birding has always been one of our prime goals, and I can think of no better role model or tour guide for beginning birders than Charlie Gant.

—Rick Lee

MINUTES, MOS BOARD MEETING SEPTEMBER 11, 2004

President: Janet Millenson
Vice-President: *absent*
Treasurer: Emmalyn Holdridge
Secretary: Janet Shields
Past President: Paul Zucker

Atlas: Walter Ellison

Awards: John Malcolm

Communications/MD Birdlife:

Bob Ringler, Lydia Schindler

Conference: Janet Shields

Long-range Planning: Paul Zucker

Sanctuary: Dotty Mumford

Scholarship: Tom Strikwerda

Allegany: Gwen Brewer

Anne Arundel: Phil Davis, Al Haury,

Dotty Mumford, Larry Zoller

Baltimore: Helene Gardel, Peter Webb

Caroline: *not represented*

Carroll: Bob Ringler, Tammy

Schwaab, Roxann Yeager

Cecil: *not represented*

Frederick: Helen Horrocks

Harford: Jean Wheeler

Howard: Mary-Jo Betts, Karen

Darcy, Jeff Friedhoffer, Tom

Strikwerda, Kate Tufts

Kent: Walter Ellison

Montgomery: Don Messersmith,

Don Simonson, Rick Sussman,

Ann Weeks

Patuxent: Fred Fallon

Talbot: *not represented*

Tri-County: *not represented*

Washington: *not represented*

President Janet Millenson called the meeting to order at 10:15 AM and thanked the Carroll County Chapter for hosting the meeting at Carroll Community College, Westminster, MD.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Emmalyn Holdridge requested that chapter treasurers not send dues checks without a list of the members covered by the checks. An easier, more efficient approach would be for chapters to send new/renewal member names to the Treasurer; who would then bill the chapters for dues. Chapter treasurers will be contacted to explore this possibility further.

Past President's Remarks: Paul Zucker made two appointments right after the conference. Tom Strikwerda is the new Scholarship chair. Mike Bowen has agreed to be State Educational Activities chair.

President's Remarks: Janet Millenson announced that Paul Zucker will head Long-range Planning, Don Messersmith will be Historian, and Gail Mackiernan will be our second representative to the American Bird Conservancy. Gail Frantz has taken over Chapter Chatter. The board approved Janet's motion to reappoint the committees and their chairs. The Executive Council met August 29 and authorized spending up to \$500 for the Treasurer to obtain a copier/fax machine, up to \$200 for a mail forward service, and paying some expenses for the Conference chair and committee members out of the Conference budget. Kate Tufts will take over handling the MOS 800 number for Mary-Jo Betts for several months.

Review of Action Items:

- Candi Lee had new membership cards printed; these are now available to chapter representatives.
- Norm Saunders has developed an updated state checklist.
- Lydia Schindler has found someone for Chapter Chatter.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Atlas: Walter Ellison announced that now is the time for data collected during the summer to be added to the online data site, hopefully by October 1, facilitating planning for the next two years. The state DNR has approved grants for the Atlas (\$40,000-\$50,000) and for a marsh bird survey (\$12,000-\$18,000) and is now awaiting U.S. Fish and Wildlife approval of the grants.

Awards: John Malcolm stated he will help make awards for the chapters and for committee chairs. Contact John for suggestions well before the awards are needed.

Communications/MD Birdlife: Bob Ringler reported that a full year of *Maryland Birdlife* was issued in June. Another issue is planned to go out before the end of the year. They are catching up on seasonal reports now. By 2006 they plan to be fully up to date with *Birdlife*.

Communications/Website: Fran Saunders sent an updated schedule for the newly revised website. Fran has redone the website. Janet Millenson would like each chapter to have an email contact on the website. These would be "aliases" to protect personal contact information.

Conference: Janet Shields reported that the committee is taking responsibility for the bulk of the work involved in conference preparation, thereby reducing the burden on host chapters. Work is starting on the Solomons 2005 conference. As 2006 is the last year of the Atlas, that conference will be hosted by the Atlas Committee and the Conference Committee jointly. The board approved Rocky Gap, Cumberland as the venue of the 2006 conference, with the Baltimore Marriott at Hunt Valley as a backup.

Conservation: Maureen Harvey was absent; her report will appear in the *Yellowthroat*.

Investment: Martha Waugh's written report was distributed to board members. Total income from May 1 to July 31, 2004 is \$14,336.29. Portfolio value is \$1,314,042.97.

Long-range Planning: Paul Zucker reviewed many suggested updates to the Manual of Operations. Several issues, including the Executive Secretary and charters of some of the new committees, will be left until the December meeting. The board approved the other changes discussed. **Sanctuary:** Dotty Mumford reported that a Frostburg professor wants to use Carey Run in a research project. Also, Eagle Scouts want to do a project at Carey Run identifying and marking where the Braddock Highway goes through it. Boy Scouts have removed a row of Autumn Olive. The Executive Council has

decided to have the buildings at Carey Run and Irish Grove professionally inspected for structural issues and environmental hazards. There are still many sanctuary upkeep projects needing volunteers. The Sanctuary Committee will look into getting assistance from local volunteer organizations in Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore.

Executive Secretary Position: Janet Millenson pointed out that because most tasks are now handled electronically, we should change this position description to be primarily computer-oriented. The Executive Secretary would maintain the membership list, the mailing list, and the discussion board. The Executive Council will define the position more precisely for the Manual of Operations. Chapters should try to find an interested person who can use computers and is detail-oriented.

OLD BUSINESS

New Address and MOS Marketing Brochure: Emmalyn Holdridge is looking into a new mailing address for MOS and will report back at the December meeting. The MOS brochures need to be reprinted, and it was decided not to wait for a possible new mailing address.

NEW BUSINESS

MOS Headquarters: MOS has a storage locker in Columbia costing over \$200/month and a mailing address at Cylburn that is not particularly convenient. We do not have a permanent place to meet. Janet Millenson feels that a headquarters is needed. Ideally, we could sublet or rent a space from another environmental group. A storage space, a cubicle for files, etc., and a meeting and library space are needed. Janet will put together a task force to look into this and coordinate it with Long-range Planning.

MD/DC Records Committee:

Phil Davis gave an update. They are working closely with the new *Yellowbook* committee to try to have some records accepted before the

conference next year. The new AOU species Cackling Goose will be added to Maryland species by the end of the year.

Mist Nets: Gwen Brewer asked if the board would approve the Research Committee developing guidelines for a mist net fund. She was told current Research Committee money could be used for this purpose and the committee should decide on funding mist nets as they do for any research project.

Marketing: John Malcolm noted that very little MOS merchandise has been sold in recent years, and it's been difficult to determine shipping prices, stock a variety of packing materials, etc. He proposed that MOS continue selling *Yellowbooks*, checklists, and the *Birdlife* CD, but sell the rest of the logo store inventory at substantial discounts during the next conference and not reorder any of it. The board approved a motion to close down the website logo store and to authorize John to hold a "fire sale" of selected items at the next conference. (Note: This does not apply to conference and Atlas merchandise, which sell well.)

Scholarship Program: Tom Strikwerda expects to have 11 scholarships available and will send out applications to all chapters. He would like a representative on his committee from each chapter.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

At Gwen Brewer's request, Dr. David Curson, Director of Conservation Science for Audubon Maryland/DC, will be added to the December board meeting agenda to speak about progress on the Important Bird Areas program. He is also eager to speak at chapter meetings.

NEW ACTION ITEMS

- Chapters should contact Fran Saunders about a chapter email contact to go on the website.
- Chapters need to submit Scholarship applicants to Tom Strikwerda by January 31, 2005.
- Chapters should ask for volunteers to lead field trips at 2005

conference and send names to Peter Hanan.

- Chapters should name representatives to Conservation, Sanctuary, and Scholarship Committees.
- Remind chapter members that Conference Pin designs be sent to John Malcolm by January 17, 2005.
- Chapters should get feedback on the idea of a central MOS headquarters location.
- Chapter treasurers should send the Treasurer an explanatory name list along with dues checks.
- The Treasurer will contact chapter treasurers about improving the membership dues/renewals process.
- Sanctuary Committee will look into using local volunteer groups to help with sanctuary projects.
- Maureen Harvey will continue to review the American Bird Conservancy policy on wind power and at the December board meeting will recommend what policy MOS should adopt.
- Long-range Planning, Executive Council, Research and other fund-based committees will discuss the issue of unspent budgeted funds carryover and propose Manual of Operations updates.
- The Executive Council will propose tasks for the Executive Secretary and consider renaming the position to reflect its updated duties.
- Board positions still needing to be filled: Development, Liaison: Environmental Fund for MD, Membership, Publicity Coordinator, Sanctuary, Youth Programs.
- Chapters considering Atlas donations should talk with Jane Coskren.
- A site is needed for the March 12 board meeting.

President Janet Millenson adjourned the meeting at 1:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by
Janet Shields
Secretary

Maryland Birders Enjoy October 10 Big Sit

compiled by Gail Frantz

Jug Bay Jugglers

(northern end of Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary)

Although the “Jug Bay Jugglers” might appear somewhat disorganized with no central coordinator, we still managed to juggle enough time to cover more than six hours of platform-watching over the tidal marsh. Thanks to a constant stiff wind with fog and overcast skies most of the morning, visibility over the marsh was poor and hearing was impaired by the movement of many tree leaves around the platform. We only managed to tie last year’s record with 52 species and it was difficult doing that. Most of our birds were waterfowl and raptors; passerines were few and far between. The only warbler species (Palm and Yellow-rumped) showed up at the end of the day. After a second year of enduring constant wind, we may opt for another spot next year. Participants included Jeff Shenot, Mike Quinlan, and Arlene Ripley.

—Arlene Ripley

Sitting on our Assateague

The defending US Big Sit champions, “Sitting on our Assateague,” were back again this year, and a wide assortment of MOS members participated at our Assateague Island/Bayside/Point site. However, we completely acknowledged the fluke that was last year and were back to hoping for 80 species. We were all pleased to come up with 91 species in the nine hours we were sitting.

The highlight for us was a very cooperative **Clay-colored Sparrow** that put on a show for the multiple digital cameras present (common complaint: “I couldn’t get closer than 4 feet”). Photos can be seen on Bill Hubick’s page (<http://www.billhubick.com/birds.html>). Unfortunately, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** was not as cooperative and was seen only by a few.

We had a decent flight of Myrtle Warblers, with Cape May being the second most common warbler. This year we were really hurting for ducks and shorebirds, but did pick up a few new species for the Sit, including **Great Horned Owl** and **Bay-breasted Warbler**. We also had an excellent turnout and I’d like to thank everyone who participated, including Mark Hoffman (the list keeper), Jim Stasz, Zach Baer, Mike Burchett, Hans Holbrook, Dave Powell, George Jett, Gwen Brewer, Kevin Graff, Stan Arnold, Bill Hubick, and Lou Nielsen.

—Matt Hafner

Kinder Farm Park

Anne Arundel Bird Club

Fourteen members sat in Kinder Farm Park at various times and counted 47 species, one better than last year. We started at 6 AM with an **Eastern Screech-Owl**, and later had a **Peregrine Falcon** flyover.

Other birds of note were a flock of Cattle Egrets, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers, and a Broad-winged Hawk. Sue Ricciardi, our hawk watcher, helped us with our final count of 60 raptors. Participants were Al Haury, Larry Zoller, Paul Speyser, Jerri Barbour, Beverly Altland, Linda Baker, Pat Tate, Jane Bird, Dotty Mumford, Susan Zevin, Bobbi Reichwein, and Tom and Sharon Bradford. We all had a great time and are plenty envious of you folks sitting near the water.

—Tom Bradford

Eastern Neck Narrows

Our third annual Big Sit is now history. For some reason our total improved for a second consecutive year, from 60 last October to 62 this time around. Is it really possible to get better at sitting around looking for birds to come close enough to reveal their identity?

I am sure the fishermen on the Narrows bridge and the passing Refuge visitors were bemused by our use of the stone pillar holding up the refuge entrance sign to obtain a loftier perspective in viewing the Narrows. (Nancy and I split duty as signpost sitters.)

The undisputed highlight of the affair was a migrating juvenile **Northern Goshawk** that clearly outsized the **Cooper’s Hawk** with whom it shared a thermal at 10 AM. Other notable birds from our (admittedly limited by mobility) perspective were Snowy and Great Egrets; two juvenile Black-crowned Night-Herons that obligingly roosted in plain view all of the time we were “on duty” (6:30 AM to 4:20 PM), a Greater Scaup, Royal and Caspian Terns with begging “independent” juveniles (atlassers take note: young terns do this even hundreds of miles from their natal colony), two flyby Dunlin, an Eastern Meadowlark flying over the marsh to the south, and a flock of eight Tufted Titmice (a rarity with all that salt marsh surrounding our spot; note that we had no cardinals or chickadees for the day). I would say our biggest misses were Northern Harrier and Eastern Bluebird.

—Walter Ellison



BOARD BULLETINS

From the December 4 meeting at Black Hill Regional Park, Montgomery County.

Motion passed:

- Per the ongoing revision of the Manual of Operations, the Budget Committee will have the option of allowing the five MOS committees funded by earnings on their endowments (Research, Sanctuary, Scholarship, Statewide Educational Activities, and Youth Activities) to carry unspent funds over into a second year.

Appointment:

- The new MOS representative to the Environmental Fund for Maryland is Gayle Bach-Watson of Frederick Co.

Announcements:

- MOS presented a 50th anniversary gift of \$500 to Cylburn Mansion, Baltimore. Cylburn has long hosted the Baltimore Bird Club, and it has served as the official address of MOS in addition to housing the MOS library.
- Now available to Chapters: Membership brochures and membership cards.
- The Research Committee is taking steps to encourage research conducted at MOS sanctuaries.

Action Items:

- Chapters are encouraged to schedule field trips/work days at MOS sanctuaries Carey Run and Irish Grove.

- In April 2005, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center is sponsoring a joint meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society and the Association of Field Ornithologists. In response to a request from Chan Robbins, the Board agreed to provide attendees with *Yellowbooks*, *Maryland Birdlife* CDs, and field checklists as well as logistical support, including field trips.
- In view of the Governor's contemplated sale of various parklands [see Conservation Connection, page 4], all chapters are asked to work with county atlas coordinators to identify any targeted tracts in their jurisdiction and to evaluate the importance of the areas to birds and bird habitat. **This information should be forwarded to Conservation Chair Maureen Harvey (Maureen.Harvey@jhuapl.edu) by January 5.** Based on findings, Maureen and the Executive Committee will develop a report and possibly a press release. In February, President Janet Millenson will present this information at the quarterly meeting of the Parks Advisory Commission of Maryland; the Commission has invited her, as a representative of the birding community, to report on birders' use of parklands.
- One property on the DNR's list of disposable lands is Pleasant Valley, once owned by the late Orville Crowder, a founding father of MOS. Don Messersmith, a longtime colleague of Orville Crowder, proposed that MOS look into acquiring this 150-acre Harford Co property from the state and making it an MOS sanctuary.

Big Sit *(continued from page 10)*

Sitting Ducks

Montgomery Bird Club at Black Hill Regional Park

It was a perfect mid-October day. A bit of fog that cleared early, followed by lots of cloudless blue sky with puffy, white clouds in the late afternoon. A group of 10 (some stayed briefly, others longer) tallied 52 species, about three less than last year. Our fiftieth bird was a beautiful **Osprey** that landed in the tree directly in front of us and stayed a while. A Great Blue Heron stayed with us at the end of the lake for the entire day. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was a new species for our Big Sit.

Missing were any ducks except for Mallard and Wood Duck. We did particularly well with raptors (six species that included three different Bald Eagles), so a new name may be in order for our team.

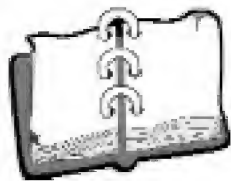
—Rick Sussman

Jug Bay Solo

My third year of Big Sitting at the south end of Jug Bay (Anne Arundel County side) produced my lowest total, primarily because I was able to put in only 3.5 hours of sitting.

The highlight among my 61 species was a lone **American Avocet**—my first one ever in October. But the bird, though no more than 10 feet from the Anne Arundel county line, stayed on the Prince George's side of the river for the entire 2.5 hours. Also got one peep from a **Sora**, a late Caspian Tern, a Blue Grosbeak, my first American Coots and first Herring Gull of the season. Also, a small assortment of ducks and other shorebirds, raptors, etc. Because I rely on hearing call notes for most identification (missed Song Sparrow, e.g.), the brisk breeze kept my passerine numbers low.

—Danny Bystrak



MOS Calendar

January-February 2005

Saturday, January 1

H Howard. "Start Your 2005 List." 3 hours. Meet 8 AM boat ramp, Centennial Park. Easy walk on paved paths and woodland trails. Carpool to different locations for as many species as possible. One day of the year when every bird is new! Facilities available. Leader/Info: Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361.

H Montgomery. "Earliest Bird." Georgetown Reservoir and DC Hotspots. Half day. Start the New Year right. Meet 8 AM Georgetown Reservoir, DC, by gate leading to dike between the pools. Leader/Reservations: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764.

Sunday, January 2

CHRISTMAS COUNT. Anne Arundel. Full day. Bring lunch. Coordinators: Sue Ricciardi, 410-647-9513, or Lynn Davidson and Hal Wierenga, 410-647-7439.

CHRISTMAS COUNT. Frederick. Sugarloaf. Info/Compilers: Helen Horrocks, 301-831-6315, or Janet Millenson, 301-983-9337.

Wednesday, January 5

H Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Ft. McHenry. Meet just past statue of Orpheus. 9:30 AM-Noon. Continuing survey of bird activity. Canceled in bad weather. Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

Thursday, January 6

MEETING. Frederick. *Armas Hill* will present "Birds of Japan: Cranes, Eagles, and More." Meet at HOMEWOOD at CRUMLAND FARMS (different venue), 7407 Willow Rd, Frederick, 7 PM. Info: Marcia Balestri, 301-473-5098.

Friday, January 7

MEETING. Anne Arundel. "Mute and Tundra Swans in Chesapeake Bay" by *Mike Slattery*. Meet 8 PM DNR Conference Room, Tawes Bldg, Rowe Blvd, Annapolis.

Saturday, January 8

H Kent. Eastern Neck NWR for winter waterfowl and land birds. Half Day. Meet Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown, 8 AM. Info/Leaders: Walter Ellison or Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568, or Peter Mann, 410-648-5205.

H Cecil. Eastern Neck NWR and Chesapeake Farms for winter waterfowl and land birds. Full day. Meet 7 AM Big Elk Mall Dunkin Donuts parking lot. Leader: Parke John, 410-287-6037.

MID-WINTER COUNT. Frederick. Audrey Carroll. Meet at the Sanctuary 6 AM. Dress warmly with waterproof boots. Info/Contact: David Smith, 410-549-7082.

Sunday, January 9

H Tri-County. MD/DE coastal birding. Meet 7:30 AM Asbury UMC north parking lot, Salisbury. Bring lunch/snack/drink. Leader: Sam Dyke, 410-742-5497.

COVERED DISH DINNER. Baltimore. Bykota Center, Towson, 5 PM. *Hank Kaestner*, world traveler and birdwatcher extraordinaire, will present "Bird Watching Adventures around the World." Reservations/Info/Food Dish Coordination: Shirley Geddes, 410-377-6583.

Tuesday, January 11

MEETING. Allegany. *Kevin Dodge* on Saw-whet Owls. Find out what Kevin and his students have discovered about this tiny owl. Meet 7 PM, Frostburg Public Library, 65 E. Main St. Info: Barbara Gaffney, 301-895-4646.

Thursday, January 13

MEETING. Howard. "Fifty Years of Birding" by *Hank Kaestner*. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM, meeting/program 8 PM at Howard Co Rec & Parks Dept, 7120 Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia. Info: Jeff Friedhoffer, 410-997-5336.

Friday, January 14

MEETING. Harford. "2004: A Birder's Odyssey" by *Hank Kaestner*. Meet 7 PM at Churchville Presbyterian Church, MD22 & 136. Light refreshments. Info: Jean Wheeler, 410-879-7424.

Friday-Monday, January 14-17

H Montgomery. Outer Banks of NC. 3 days. Wintering ducks, geese, swans, shorebirds, loons, gannets. Search for less common gulls and variety of land birds. Extension of traditional trip before or after to other NWRs a possibility. Call leader for motel and trip info; reservations required. Limit 12. Jim Green will lead: 301-871-7990.

Saturday, January 15

H Kent. Feeder Watch at home of Peter Mann and Nancy Everds. Meet 9 AM for coffee and birds. Info: Peter Mann, 410-648-5205.

H Harford. 14th Annual Feeder Tour. Who can resist good food, good company, and chance to check out what the Jones's are getting at their bird feeder? Morning trip to three or more "winter bird equipped" houses. From meeting location we will carpool. Participation limited, reservations required. Info/Reservations/ Meet Time and Place: Les Eastman, 410-734-6969.

H Patuxent. Meet 7:30 AM at Governor's Bridge Park, for foray to nearby ponds as reports dictate. Info: Fred Fallon, 301-249-1518.

H Cecil. Ocean City area. Full day. Meet 6 AM Big Elk Mall Dunkin Donuts parking area. Leader: Sean McCandless, 410-392-3407.

MID-WINTER COUNT. Frederick. Meet at Fred Archibald Sanctuary 6 AM. Dress warmly, wear waterproof boots. Info: Bob Schaefer, 301-831-5660.

MID-WINTER COUNT. Carroll. Coordinate locations with Bill Ellis, 410-781-7113. Join Tally Rally at home of Bill and Pat Ellis 6 PM (RSVP 410-781-7113). Food or \$ donation, please. Results can be mailed to Bill if unable to attend rally.

H Anne Arundel. Holly Beach Farm for wintering waterfowl. Half day. Meet 8 AM at Bay 50 Shopping Center parking lot off Rte 50. Leader: Al Haury, 410-923-0881.

H Washington. Snavelly Trail and Antietam Battlefield. Meet 9 AM Rte 65 P&R below the MVA. Leader/Info: Shirley Ford, 301-241-3020.

Wednesday, January 19

MEETING. Montgomery. "What Have I Learned from 100,000 Hours of Backyard Banding?" *Dr. Chan Robbins*, known to every MOS member and co-author of the Golden Guide to Birds of North America, has observed 200 species of birds in his Laurel backyard over the past 30 years, and he's banded about 100 of them. He will share his findings with us in a Power-Point presentation. Meet 7:30 PM, Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac.

Thursday, January 20

MEETING. Caroline. "Backyard Wildlife Habitat, Including Local Wildlife" by *Carol Jelich*, a trained habitat steward for NWF. Meet 7:30 PM at Caroline County Public Library, 100 Market St, Denton.

Saturday, January 22

Kent. Ocean City and northern Assateague Island. Waterfowl, seabirds, and always the possibility of unusual migrants. Full day. Meet Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown, 8 AM. Info: Walter Ellison or Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568, or Peter Mann, 410-648-5205.

Baltimore. Walk at Ft. McHenry. Meet just past statue of Orpheus. 8 AM-Noon. Cancelled if raining. Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

C&O Canal. 7th Annual C&O Canal Midwinter Bird Survey. The goal is to tally species and numbers on a mile-by-mile basis along the entire 184.5 miles of the canal, using many teams that cover two to three miles each. To participate, contact Peter Vankevich at the Audubon Society of District of Columbia. <http://dcaudubon.org/> or 202-397-5593. (Make-up date Jan 23.)

MID-WINTER COUNT. Allegany. C&O Canal. Make-up date Jan 23 if weather is bad. Info: Barbara Gaffney, 301-895-4646.

MID-WINTER COUNT. Frederick. C&O Canal. Bad weather make-up date Jan 23. Dress warmly, wear waterproof boots. Info/Contact: David Smith, 410-549-7082.

MID-WINTER COUNT. Baltimore. Info/Coordinator: Pete Webb, 410-486-1217.

Sunday, January 23

Anne Arundel. Annapolis Neck and Thomas Point for waterfowl, followed by soup social. Meet 12 Noon at Bay 50 Shopping Center parking lot off Rte 50.

Info/Leader/Host: Gerald Winegrad, 410-280-8956. RSVP to Gerald by Jan 20 if you plan to stay for soup.

Harford. Perryville Town Park. Join co-leaders Russ Kovach and Colleen Webster for tour of this very birdy park at Susquehanna Flats and Furnace Bay. Trails open and paved, easy walking. Bring scope and meet at MD155/I-95 P&R 8 AM. Contact: Russ, 443-386-4787.

Monday, January 24

MEETING. Tri-County. Program TBA. Meet 7 PM at Asbury UMC, Fox Room, south entrance, Salisbury.

Tuesday, January 25

MEETING. Washington. "Chasing Birds with Charlie," a video travelogue of Costa Rica. Meet 7:30 PM at Mt. Aetna Nature Center. Info: Anna Hutzell, 301-797-8454.

Wednesday, January 26

MEETING. Cecil. Program TBA. 7 PM at Elkton HS media center, Elkton. Raffle, refreshments. Info: Rick Lee, 410-287-0415.

Saturday, January 29

Patuxent. Meet 8:30 AM at Bowie P&R for trip to Near-Shore spots for wintering Snow Buntings and Longspurs, waterfowl. Likely spots scouted beforehand. Half-day. Leaders: Fred and Jane Fallon, 301-249-1518.

Sunday, January 30

MID-WINTER COUNT. Frederick. Call David Smith, 410-549-7082, to sign up. Tally Rally at Dave and Carol's house.

Montgomery. Seneca Creek SP. Half day. Meet at park office 8 AM. Look for ducks, woodpeckers, other land birds. Some walking on roads, trails, farm fields. Leader/Info: Dave Powell, 301-540-8776.

Cecil. Winter Season at Fair Hill. Half day. Meet 8 AM Fair Hill covered bridge parking lot (fee to park). Leader: Parke John, 410-287-6037.

Tuesday, February 1

MEETING. Baltimore. Tuesday Evenings at Cylburn Mansion (off Greenspring Ave, 1 block S of Northern Pkwy, Baltimore). 7 PM for refreshments and socializing. Lecture 7:45-9 PM. "Planting for Birds and Wildlife" by *Daryl Dutrow*, owner of Wildlife Landscapes, Monkton.

Telling Tales

Some years ago, following up on a rare bird report, Rich Bray and pals were searching the grounds of St. Elizabeths, the District of Columbia's psychiatric hospital. The birders' behavior drew the attention of a staff member, who walked over and asked what they were up to. "Oh," said Rich brightly, "we're looking for burrowing owls."

Wednesday, February 2

MEETING. Carroll. Meet 7:30 PM at Senior Center, Stoner Ave, Westminster. *Mark Hoffman* will present "Tarheel or Bust," recounting CCBC trip to North Carolina last year. Info: Laura Tarbell, 410-857-1109.

Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Ft. McHenry. 9:30 AM-Noon. Meet just past statue of Orpheus. Continuing survey of bird activity at the Fort. Canceled in bad weather. Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

Thursday, February 3

MEETING. Frederick. *Richard Koogle* from Lilypons will speak on "Water Gardening for Wildlife—How to Create a Natural Pond with Plants." Meet 7 PM at C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick. Contact: Marcia Balestri, 301-473-5098.

Friday, February 4

MEETING. Anne Arundel. "Bird Conservation on Military Lands" by *Chris Eberly*. Meet 8 PM DNR Conference Room, Tawes Bldg, Rowe Blvd, Annapolis.

Saturday, February 5

Kent. Larks, Longspurs, Snow Buntings. Open fields of central and eastern Kent County. Half day. Meet Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown, 8 AM. Info: Walter Ellison or Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568, or Peter Mann, 410-648-5205.

Montgomery. Ocean City to Broadkill Marsh, DE. Full day. Wintering waterfowl, gulls, terns, shorebirds. Meet 8 AM at Ocean City Inlet parking lot. Trip may be moved to following weekend if weather conditions dictate. Leader/Reservations: John Bjerke, 301-963-8525.

MOS Calendar (continued from page 13)

H Harford. World-famous Bradenbaugh Flats. Morning drive-and-stop trip through hedgerows and large open fields. Meet 8 AM at Jarrettsville Elem School. Follow-up at Kirkwood's house featuring delicious homemade soup and breads. Info: Dennis Kirkwood, 410-692-5905.

H Patuxent. Meet 7:30 AM Fran Uhler Natural Area, end of Lemon Bridge Rd, off Laurel-Bowie Rd (MD197), just north of Bowie College and MARC line. 3 hours. Info: Fred Fallon, 301-249-1518.

H Anne Arundel. Feeder Watch at backyard feeders. Meet 8 AM at Severna Park P&R, Jones Station Rd & Ritchie Hwy. Half day. Leader: Lynn Kenny, 301-464-8371.

H Cecil. Cecil Landfill for Gulls. Meet 8 NE Plaza (old ACME) parking lot, half day. Trip canceled in bad weather. Leader/Info: Gene Scarpulla, 410-388-0852.

H Frederick. Maryland Hot Line Trip, joint with Howard County Club for winter rarities reported on the hotline. Emphasis on Frederick Co birds, but may wander farther afield depending on what is out there. Meet 8:30 AM at Baker Park. Info: Gary Smyle, 301-663-0055.

Sunday, February 6

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Anne Arundel.** All day. Coordinator: Al Haury, 410-923-0881.

Tuesday, February 8

MEETING. **Allegany.** "Birds and Bats in the Brazilian Amazon" by *Gwen Brewer* and *George Jett*. Explore the biodiversity of western Brazil through photos from 12-day, 400-mile boat trip down the Amazon and tributaries. Over 200 species of birds and 28 species of bats identified in the flooded forests. The presentation will focus on the natural history of the rich bird and bat fauna, along with a sampling of tropical plants, insects, reptiles, fish, and other mammals. Meet 7 PM, Frostburg Public Library, 65 E Main St. Info: Barbara Gaffney, 301-895-4646.

Thursday, February 10

MEETING. **Howard.** "Raptors Rule: A Visit with Live Birds of Prey" by *Mike Callahan*. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM, meeting/program 8 PM at Howard Co Rec & Parks Dept, 7120 Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia. Info: Jeff Friedhoffer, 410-997-5336.

H indicates Field Trips

Saturday, February 12

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Cecil.** Coordinator: Sean McCandless, 410-392-3407.

Saturday-Monday, February 12-14

H Carroll. Presidents' Day Weekend at the Beach. Come spend all or part of holiday weekend with us. Meet 10 AM at Bombay Hook NWR Visitor Center. Limited accommodations. Leader: Bill Ellis, 410-781-7113.

Sunday, February 13

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Kent.** Full day. Contact: Walter Ellison or Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568, or Peter Mann, 410-648-5205.

H Montgomery. Black Hill RP. Half day. Waterfowl and land birds. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. Bring scope and snacks. Leader: Rob Gibbs, 301-253-6903.

H Harford. Black Marsh to Marshy Point (Baltimore Co). State Wildland and Natural Heritage Area, one of the finest tidal marshes in Upper Bay. Great variety of habitat offers winter birds from large rafts of Scaup and Ruddy Ducks to Tundra Swan, Winter Wren, Fox Sparrow. Lucky spotters may also see beaver, fox, otter. Co-leaders Dave Larking and Phil Powers. Info: Dave, 410-569-8319.

Wednesday, February 16

MEETING. **Montgomery.** *Dr. Doug Gill*, professor of zoology at U-MD, has been planting prairie grasses and plants on an Eastern Shore farm with students for several years. In a short time, Grasshopper Sparrows, Dickcissels, and other grassland birds have found this restored habitat and are nesting there. He will share the phenomenal results of this project with us. Meet 7:30 PM, Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac.

Thursday, February 17

MEETING. **Caroline.** "Prime Hook Wildlife Refuge" by *Susan Talbott*. Meet 7:30 PM at Caroline County Public Library, 100 Market St, Denton.

Friday, February 18

H Washington. Winter birds and waterfowl. Meet 9 AM at Rte 65 P&R below MVA. Leader/Info: Bob Keedy, 301-733-7708.

Saturday, February 19

H Cecil. "Hardcore Owling." Meet Big Elk Mall Dunkin Donuts parking area 4 AM, birding "until we drop." Leader: Sean McCandless, 410-392-3407.

H Patuxent. All-day coastal trip from Ocean City to Indian River Inlet, DE, for waterfowl, unusual gulls, possible winter rarities. Leader/Info: Fred Shaffer, 410-721-1744.

H Harford. MD & DE shore. Target birds: Northern Gannet, eider, Harlequin Duck, Purple Sandpiper, Snowy Owl, Great Cormorant, Brown-headed Nuthatch. Bring lunch and wear warm clothing. Meet at MD155 & I-95 P&R 6:30 AM. Leader/Info: Les Eastman, 410-734-6969.

H Baltimore. Walk at Ft. McHenry. Meet just past statue of Orpheus. 8 AM-Noon. Cancelled if raining. Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

Saturday-Monday, February 19-21

H Anne Arundel. Annual Winter Birding Weekend. NJ coast, Brigantine, and other nearby locations. Leader/Info/Reservations (required by Feb. 12): Peter Hanan, 410-672-5672.

H Frederick. Presidents' Weekend trip to Eastern Shore. Info/Reservations: Mike Welch, 301-874-5828.

H Montgomery. Presidents' Weekend to Delmarva Peninsula: Wilmington, DE to Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel, VA. Four days. Joint trip with ANS. Winter waterfowl, songbirds, possible white-winged gulls, eiders, Harlequin Ducks, and Great Cormorants. Check ANS Naturalist News for more info. Reservations required. Leader: Paul DuMont, 703-931-8994.

Tuesday, February 22

MEETING. **Washington.** "Mt. Aetna Nature Center and the Collections It Contains," by *Floyd Murdock*. Meet 7:30 PM at Mt. Aetna Nature Center. Info: Anna Hutzell, 301-797-8454.

Saturday, February 26

H Carroll. Joint with Howard County Bird Club for late winter birds. Time and place TBD. Coordinator/Info: Jim Wilkinson, 410-381-9250.

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Howard.** Joint with Carroll County Bird Club. Meet 8 AM at MD32/I-70 P&R, full day, moderate walking. Stop for lunch break at restaurant. Bring snacks, drinks, dress warmly. Leaders/Info: Bill Ellis and Jim Wilkinson, 410-381-9250.

Sunday, February 27

H Harford. Susquehanna SP. Great riverside access and extensive forests. Expect nuthatches, sapsuckers, and nice mix of open water ducks. Meet 7:30 AM at Rock Run Mill. Info: Colleen Webster, 410-942-0867.

Monday, February 28

MEETING. Tri-County. Program TBA. Meet 7 PM at Asbury UMC, Fox Room, south entrance, Salisbury.

Tuesday, March 1

MEETING. Baltimore. Tuesday Evenings at Cylburn Mansion (off Greenspring Ave, 1 block S of Northern Pkwy, Baltimore). 7 PM for refreshments and socializing. Lecture 7:45-9 PM. "Walk on the Wild Side, Part II" by *Kathy Woods*, state and federally licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

Wednesday, March 2

MEETING. Carroll. Meet 7:30 PM at Senior Center, Stoner Ave, Westminster. *Dave Brinker* will present a program on Northern Goshawks. Info/Contact: Laura Tarbell, 410-857-1109.

H Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Ft. McHenry. 9:30 AM-Noon. Meet just past statue of Orpheus. Continuing survey of bird activity at the Fort. Canceled in bad weather. Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

Thursday, March 3

MEETING. Anne Arundel. Richard E. Heise, Jr. Annual Wildlife Lecture. TBA in newsletter. Meet 8 PM Quiet Waters Park. Hosts: Hal Wierenga, Lynn Davidson, Sally Rowe, and Sue Ricciardi.

MEETING. Frederick. *Wil Hershberger* will discuss birds of Arizona and New Mexico. Meet 7 PM at C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick. Info: Marcia Balestri, 301-473-5098.

Saturday, March 5

H Anne Arundel. Beverly Triton Beach for late winter woodland birds, waterfowl. Half day. Meet 8 AM at Parole P&R. Leader: Al Haury, 410-923-0881.

H Frederick. Timberdoodles at Audrey Carroll. Doug Parker will lead search for American Woodcock. Last year we had excellent looks them displaying, and feeding on the ground. Meet 5:30 PM at Rte 75 P&R just south of I-70. Bring flashlight. Info: Doug, 301-663-1909.

H Cecil. Horsehead Wetlands Center for waterfowl and spring migrants. Fee waived for those with MOS membership card. Half day. Meet Big Elk Mall Dunkin Donuts parking area 7:30 AM. Leaders: Rick and Candi Lee, 410-287-0415.

H Patuxent. Meet 7:30 AM Fran Uhler Natural Area, end of Lemon Bridge Rd, off Laurel-Bowie Rd (MD197), north of Bowie College and MARC line. 3 hours. Info: Fred Fallon, 301-249-1518.

H Kent. Eastern Neck NWR for winter waterfowl and land birds. Half day. Meet Dollar General parking lot, Chestertown, 8 AM. Info: Walter Ellison or Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568, or Peter Mann, 410-648-5205.

H Harford. Muddy Run WMA. Three-quarters day to southern Lancaster Co, PA hotspot along Susquehanna River, which has recorded over 250 bird species. Something rare shows up nearly every year, but among many birds to be expected are Common Loon, Snow Goose, Bald Eagle, American Pipit, Fox Sparrow. Bring lunch and meet at 7 AM at MD543 & I-65 P&R. Info/Leader: Russ Kovach, 443-386-4787.

Sunday, March 6

H Baltimore. Loch Raven. Meet 8 AM for waterfowl and land birds. Possible Bald Eagles and bluebirds. Scopes useful. Two-mile, level walk. Beginning birders welcome. All cars must park on same side of road. Leader: Debbie Terry, 410-252-8771.

What Bird Says "Solomons" to you?

All artistically inclined MOS members are invited to submit designs for the 2005 Pin Design Contest. In addition to representing a bird appropriate to the conference site, the pin must incorporate the phrases "MOS" and "2005." To see all the rules, check the MOS website (www.mdbirds.org, then activities, then Conference) or contact John Malcolm at 301-977-5788 or smudgie@comcast.net.

Audubon Camp Scholarships

MOS will be awarding 11 scholarships to week-long camps in Maine, Minnesota, or Wisconsin. Candidates should be people in a position to pass on knowledge gained to young people—teachers, park rangers, naturalists, etc. Check the website, talk to your chapter president, or contact Tom Strikwerda at 301-942-2841, tstrik@earthlink.net.

State, County, Yard Lists

For folks who like to keep track of all the birds they see and where they see them, there are the annual locality lists, compiled by Norm Saunders (marshhawk@att.net or 301-989-9035). You'll find all the details, along with the reporting form, in the Nov/Dec *Yellowthroat*.

AVIAN ENVIRONMENTALISM: WEB LINKS

The Conservation Page on the MOS web site lists other sites that are useful in finding out about issues, and that make it easy to contact the appropriate officials if you are interested in taking action by e-mail. Go to <http://www.mdbirds.org/>, then click on *Conservation*, then *Earth News*. (The views represented by these web sites are not necessarily those of the MOS or the author.)

Action Network Hub (<http://actionnetwork.org/>): ANHub is a broad-based gateway to online activism centers for leading environment, health, and population advocacy organizations.

American Bird Conservancy Web Action Link (<http://www.albatrossaction.org/>): ABC's mission is to conserve wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. Their Web Action Link is currently focused on seabirds killed by the hooks of fishing vessel longlines.

Care2 Environmental Network (<http://www.care2.com/>): Care2 partnered with nonprofit organizations and eco-friendly companies to offer products and services with a "green twist." Using their search engine, Care2 provides eco-info (and info on other topics) from many nonprofit organizations.

Center for Environmental Citizenship (<http://www.envirocitizen.org/index.asp>): CEC was founded by college students to increase their peers' participation on environmental issues.

Environmental Activism Issues Hub (<http://environment.about.com/od/activism/>): People visit About.com for many things, including home repair, decorating ideas, and even environmental activism. About.com provides content relevant to your interests on any of these topics.

Environmental Defense

(<http://www.environmentaldefense.org/home.cfm>): ED is dedicated to protecting the environmental rights of people, using science and law to bring about national reform.

League of Conservation Voters (<http://www.lcv.org/>): LCV is the political voice of the national environmental movement, devoted to shaping a pro-environment Congress and White House. Their Congressional Scorecard rates all Congressional votes (e.g., for the 108th session of Congress, Mikulski gets 79%, Sarbanes gets 84%, Ben Cardin gets 100%, and Elijah Cummings gets a score of 90%).

MD Eco-System (<http://mdecosystem.e-actionmax.com/default.asp>): Currently under revision. The MD Eco-System is a collaborative effort among environmental organizations throughout MD, working to educate and mobilize their memberships utilizing a state-of-the-art electronic action alert system. This site is most active from December to April, when the MD legislature is in session.

The Petition Site (<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/>): This site is linked to Care2, and provides easy access to email petitions.

Scorecard (<http://www.scorecard.org/>): Sponsored by Environmental Defense, Scorecard provides information about pollution problems and toxic chemicals and assists in taking action.

Youth-led Environmental Activism (<http://freechild.org/enviro.htm>): This link accesses the Freechild Project. The site lists numerous youth environmental action groups.

—Joan Cwi

For additional information, call Joan Cwi at 410-467-5352 or email Bryce Butler at CapitanoB@aol.com.

LAST CALL

...for information on parklands being considered for sale, deadline January 5.
(See pages 4 and 11 for details.)

...for entries in the Pin Design Contest, deadline January 17.
(See page 15 for details.)

...for Annual Bird List submissions, deadline January 20.
(See page 15 for details.)

...for Scholarship applications, deadline January 31.
(See page 15 for details.)

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Cylburn Mansion
4915 Greenspring Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21290-4698

Nonprofit Org. U.S. POSTAGE PAID at Hagerstown, MD Permit No. 184

POSTMASTER: TIME-DATED MATERIAL—PLEASE EXPEDITE!